

SPECIAL TRIBUTE ISSUE TO SCIENCE FICTION GRAND MASTER JAMES GUNN



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**BASEMENT
SUBLET**

ISSUE

#5

**October
2016**

THE BASEMENT SUBLET OF HORROR MAGAZINE



**THE STRANGE STORY OF
THE RELUCTANT WITCH**



**GUNN'S LITERATURE IN
SCIENCE FICTION SERIES**

ALSO:

**Part Two of Richard Chamberlain's
Guide to the films of Boris Karloff**

Science Fiction Author
JAMES GUNN

Galaxy

SCIENCE FICTION

MAY 1953

35¢
ANC



Cover of the Galaxy Science Fiction magazine that first published
"Wherever You May Be," also known as The Reluctant Witch.
See page 20 for more information.

THE BASEMENT SUBLET OF HORROR MAGAZINE

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Photo: James Gunn in 1975. Photo by Robin Wayne Bailey.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH SCIENCE FICTION AUTHOR

JAMES GUNN

"I don't know if there is any one secret to successful writing, but one important step is to move beyond imitation and discover what you can write that no one else can — that is, find out who you are and write that in an appropriate narrative and style."

- James Gunn



BSOH: Could you tell us one of your fondest memories from your fandom or history?

Gunn: I have been fortunate to have had many of them in a long career — when I was presented the SFRA's Pilgrim award in Missoula (Science Fiction Research Association, 1976), the Hugo in Baltimore (1983), the Grand Master in New York (Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master Award for lifetime achievement in science fiction and fantasy, 2007), and the Hall of Fame induction in Seattle (2015), even moments in my overseas lectures for USIA, particularly one evening in Bucarest. But my fondest memory may come from my first--when I attended my first convention, which happened to be the 10th annual World Science Fiction Convention in 1952, and I met many of the heroes of my reading for the first time and joined a fellowship that I have been a part of ever since.

BSOH: You met H. G. Wells when you were young, did this experience help shape your interest in science fiction or were you already on the path?

Gunn: I didn't exactly "meet" him. I heard him speak in Kansas City in 1937 and pushed forward through a crowd to try to shake his hand, but he brushed past without a glance. But I had been a reader for half-a-dozen years by then, including lots of SF magazines and lots of Wells, as well as Jules Verne, H. Rider Haggard, Arthur Conan Doyle, and others.

BSOH: What do you think Mr. Wells would be writing about today?

Gunn: Social issues. His work was always concerned with the way society was structured and how it could be improved. Even then he called for an open conspiracy of people of good will to create a better world.

BSOH: Do you think the futuristic advances we see — smartphones, medicine, and other technologies help science fiction authors or inhibit their imaginations?



H. G. Wells

Gunn: They are part of the changing times that we all inhabit, and they are shaping the future that we are going to inhabit. If other writers are like me (and many are), they get their ideas for stories from the technologies that are being developed as they watch.

BSOH: Tell us about meeting some of the science fiction authors that you've interviewed in the past?

Gunn: One of the most meaningful parts of the Science Fiction Lecture Film series was how willing everybody was to participate. The only authors I could never persuade to do a film with me were Robert Heinlein and Ray Bradbury, and in the case of Bradbury it was because we could never work out a time and place.



Robert Heinlein

BSOH: What author would you like to interview today?

Gunn: If I could go back in time, I'd still like to do Heinlein and Bradbury, or even farther back, Wells. Among contemporary authors, China Mieville and Charles Stross, both of whom are doing some really different fiction. What I was looking for with those I interviewed were authors who represented a body of knowledge or experience that dealt with a particularly aspect of SF. It really was about subject.



Forest J. Ackermann

BSOH: It's interesting that you got to film an interview with Forest J. Ackermann in his museum home in Los Angeles. Given that he had such an overwhelming amount of science fiction and movie memorabilia in his collection, what was the most interesting experience for you during your visit? Is there anything else that you'd like to mention about Ackermann or his museum?

Gunn: What was most interesting is that he had scripted the entire interview, which no doubt emerged from his expertise in the film business. Of course his collection was overwhelming (his entire Spanish-style house had been turned over to his books and film memorabilia and he had moved out; this was before he bought the Hollywood mansion in which he spent the latter years of his life). And he tried to get more subjects for

me: he persuaded George Pal to come to his place to do an interview, and tried to get Fritz Lang (who declined, because it might interfere with his lecture career).

BSOH: Your next novel "Transgalactic", that's scheduled to be released next year, is said to be a sequel to your previous novel "Transcendental". How does the new novel continue the story and will this be a continued series or does the story conclude in Transgalactic?

Gunn: At the end of TRANSCENDENTAL Asha and Riley have been transported to different

parts of the galaxy and have to find their ways back together. I'm well into the third volume, TRANSFORMATION, in which their transformation and their reunion come to the challenge of an alien invasion.

BSOH: What are your plans for novels or writings beyond your next published work "Transgalactic"?

Gunn: TRANSFORMATION may be the last of my novels. Anything more will likely be at the short story length.

BSOH: I'm an avid follower of the NASA coverage of the Cassini Solstice Mission and the New Horizons mission to Pluto and the Kuiper Belt; what stands out to you in the discoveries that have been made? What new discoveries do you think will be found as New Horizons leaves our solar system?

Gunn: The outer belts are so far out there that it's unlikely anything new will be discovered by these. But maybe we will be surprised!

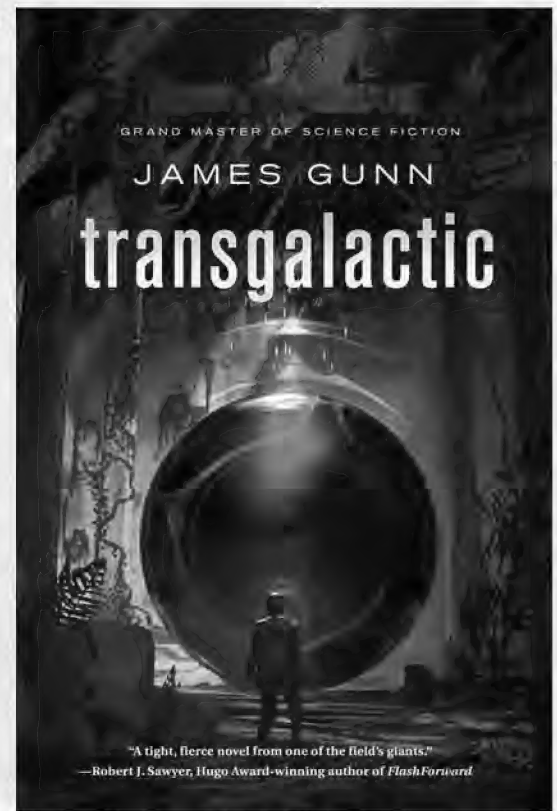
Thanks to James Gunn, Issac Bell, Dave Toplikar, and Kris Hermanson for assisting with questions, research, and concepts for this interview.

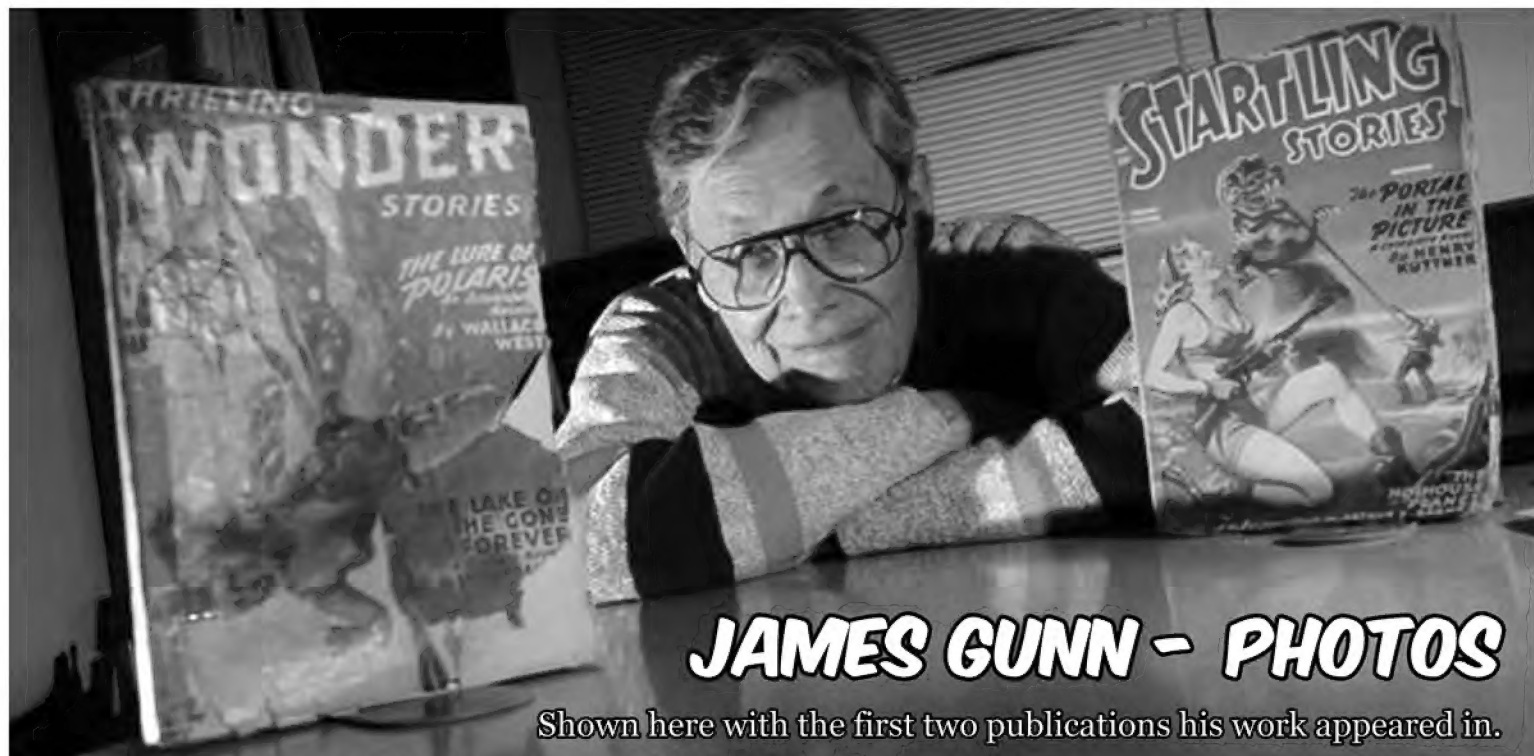
James Gunn: Bio

James Gunn was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1923. He received his B.S. degree in journalism in 1947 after three years in the U.S. Navy during World War II, and his M.A. in English in 1951, both from the University of Kansas. He also did graduate work in theater at KU and Northwestern. In 1969 at the University of Kansas, he taught one of the first courses in science fiction.

In 2007, Gunn was named "Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master." He was Guest of Honor at the 2013 WorldCon in San Antonio, Texas; Special Guest at the same year's Eaton/SFRA Conference in Riverside, California; and of course permanent Special Guest at the Campbell Conference in Lawrence, Kansas.

Gunn has worked as an editor of paperback reprints, as managing editor of KU alumni publications, as director of KU public relations, as a professor of English, and now is professor emeritus of English and director of the Center for the Study of Science Fiction. He won national awards for his work as an editor and a director of public relations. He was awarded the Byron Caldwell Smith Award in recognition of literary achievement and the Edward Grier Award for excellence in teaching, was president of the Science Fiction Writers of America for 1971-72, and president of the Science Fiction Research Association from 1980-82, was guest of honor at many regional SF conventions, including SFeracon in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, and Polcon, the Polish National SF convention, in Katowice; was presented the Pilgrim Award of SFRA in 1976, a special award from the 1976 World SF Convention for Alternate Worlds, a Science Fiction Achievement Award (Hugo) by the 1983 World SF Convention for Isaac Asimov: The Foundations of Science Fiction,





JAMES GUNN - PHOTOS

Shown here with the first two publications his work appeared in.



Gunn at a event in 1975..



Gunn with coeditor Issac Bell, creators of the online science fiction publication Ad Astra, 2013.



Gunn stands in the middle of The Center for Science Fiction's massive collection of published material.



Gunn Grandmaster at the 2007 Nebula Awards ceremony.

the Eaton Award in 1992 for lifetime achievement, and named Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master by the Science Fiction Writers of America in 2007; was a KU Mellon Fellow in 1981 and 1984; and served from 1978-80 and 1985-present as chairman of the Campbell Award jury to select the best science fiction novel of the year. He has lectured in Denmark, China, Iceland,

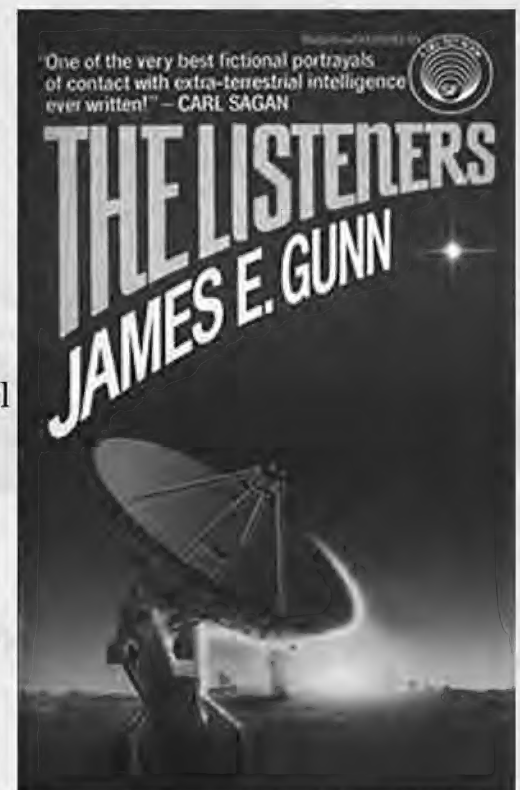
Japan, Poland, Romania, Singapore, Sweden, Taiwan, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union for the U.S. Information Agency.

Gunn started writing SF in 1948, was a full-time freelance writer for four years, and has had nearly 100 stories published in magazines and books; most of them have been reprinted, some as many as a dozen times. He is the author of 26 books and the editor of 18; his master's thesis was serialized in a pulp magazine. Four of his stories were dramatized over NBC radio's "X Minus One;" "The Cave of Night" was dramatized on television's Desilu Playhouse in 1959 as "Man in Orbit;" and The Immortals was dramatized as an ABC-TV "Movie of the Week" in 1969 as "The Immortal" and became an hour-long series in 1970-71. His stories and books have been reprinted in Australia, China, England, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Scandinavia, South America, Spain, Taiwan, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia.

- Bio from the KU Center for Science Fiction web site

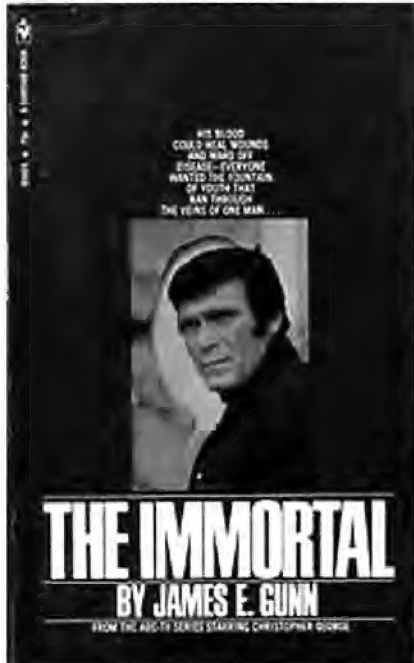
Additional James Gunn information:

- Gunn wrote 10 short stories published as by Edwin James, a pseudonym derived from his full name. "My first 10 stories I signed with a pen name, Edwin James. That was partly because it was a tradition in science fiction, but also because I had the notion that I wanted to save my real name for the 'critical work' I thought of doing,".
- Carl Sagan called Gunn's novel, The Listeners from 1972, "one of the very best fictional portrayals of contact with extraterrestrial intelligence ever written." According to the publisher of a 2004 edition, "this book predicted and inspired the creation of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) (The organization dedicated to the search for extraterrestrial life)."
- In 1996, Gunn wrote a novelization of "The Joy Machine," an un-produced episode of Star Trek scripted by Theodore Sturgeon.
- Gunn just signed a fresh option for a feature film version of his book "The Immortals."
- "Isaac Asimov used to tell me 'The Immortals' must have been autobiographical."
- Gunn's Center for Science Fiction at The University of Kansas has a collection of more than 30,000 volumes of science fiction books, publications and multimedia materials.
- The Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame was founded in 1996 by the Kansas City Science Fiction and Fantasy Society (Kansas City, Missouri) and the Center for the Study of Science Fiction (CSSF) at the University of Kansas (KU).



James Gunn's Television Series

The Immortal is a television series that originally aired on ABC in September of 1969, starring Christopher George. The plot is based on a science fiction novel by James Gunn by the same name. The show became a series that ran on ABC from September 1970 to January 1971 as an ABC Movie of the Week. Although the series was canceled mid-season, episodes were rerun by ABC in the summer of 1971. It was later shown on the Sci-Fi Channel.



The Immortal tells the story of a test driver, Ben Richards, who discovers that his blood contains immunity to all known diseases that in effect, make him immortal. When an elderly billionaire named 'Maitland' learns of Richards' condition, he hires a mercenary named Fletcher to track Richards all over the country, capture him, and bring him back to Maitland's estate for periodic transfusions. When Richards rejects all of the billionaire's offers to remain with him, the billionaire has him imprisoned, but he ultimately escapes. Despite getting away from Maitland, who eventually dies, he continues to be pursued by Fletcher and others who shared Maitland's interest in him.

The series details Richards' adventures with people he meets on the run while keeping ahead of Fletcher and his goons. The plotline of **The Immortal** is very different from the book on which it is

based. Instead, it bears more than a superficial resemblance to the very popular TV series of that time called **The Fugitive**, which had ended its four season run three years before **The Immortal** began. It is also the mirror opposite of the series **Run for Your Life** about a terminally ill man who wants to experience everything because before he dies while Richards has to run because he's going to live virtually forever.

The mark of a good show is that it survives in the form of reruns for years after it was broadcast, or is revived by fan request because of nostalgia for a program. In the age of abundant television content where the visual medium is being mined for all usable content, it's good to know that excellent shows like **The Immortal** has its own immunity and continues to survive and entertain viewers. Ironically, the shows star Christopher George, died of a heart attack aged only 52, barely a decade after the series ended.

8:30 p.m. World Premiere!!
MOVIE ★★★★★
OF THE WEEK

A Grande Prix racing driver's rare blood makes him almost indestructible.
Chris George, Carol Lynley, Jessica Walter, Barry Sullivan and Ralph Bellamy star.



JAMES GUNN - PUBLISHED BOOKS

- **This Fortress World**, 1955 (Gnome), 1957 (Ace), 1979 (Berkley)
- **Star Bridge** (with Jack Williamson), 1955 (Gnome), 1956, 1961 (Ace), 1977 (Berkley), 1982 (Del Rey), 1989 (MacMillan), TBA (Tor Books classic reprint series)
- **Station in Space**, 1958 (Bantam), 1999 (e-reads)
- **The Joy Makers**, 1961 (Bantam), 1964 (SF Book Club), 1971 (Bantam), 1984 (Crown), 1997 (Buccaneer)
- **The Immortals**, 1962, 1968 (Bantam), 1979 (Pocket)
- **Future Imperfect**, 1964 (Bantam), 1992 (e-reads)
- **Man and the Future**, (editor), 1968 (University Press of Kansas)
- **The Witching Hour**, 1970 (Dell)
- **The Immortal**, 1970 (Bantam)
- **The Burning**, 1972 (Dell)
- **Breaking Point**, 1972 (Walker), 1973 (DAW)
- **The Listeners**, 1972 (Scribner's), 1972 (SF Book Club), 1974 (NAL), 1985 (Del Rey), 1991 (Easton Press), 2004 (BenBella)
- **Some Dreams are Nightmares**, 1974 (Scribner's)
- **The End of the Dreams**, 1975 (Scribner's)
- **Nebula Award Stories Ten** (editor), 1975 (Harper & Row), 1976 (Berkley)
- **Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction**, 1975 (Prentice-Hall), 1976 (A&W Visual Library), 1976 (Quality Paperback Book Club), TBA (the Beijing Division of the Shanghai Century Publishing Company)
- **The Magicians**, 1976 (Scribner's), 1980 (NAL)
- **Kampus**, 1977 (Bantam), 1986 (Easton)
- **The Road to Science Fiction; From Gilgamesh to Wells** (editor), 1977 (NAL)
- **The Road to Science Fiction #2: From Wells to Heinlein** (editor), 1979 (NAL)
- **The Road to Science Fiction #3: From Heinlein to Here** (editor), 1979 (NAL)
- **The Road to Science Fiction #4: From Here to Forever** (editor), 1982 (NAL)
- **The Dreamers**, 1981 (Simon & Schuster), 1982 (as The Mind Masters) (Pocket)
- **Isaac Asimov: The Foundation of Science Fiction**, 1982 (Oxford).
- **Tiger! Tiger!**, 1984 (Drumm)
- **Crisis!**, 1986 (Tor)
- **The New Encyclopedia of Science Fiction** (editor), 1988 (Viking Penguin)
- **Inside Science Fiction**, 1992 (Borgo)
- **The Best of Astounding: Classic Short Novels from the Golden Age of Science Fiction** (editor), 1992 (Carroll & Graf)
- **The Unpublished Gunn, Part One**, 1992 (Drumm)
- **The Unpublished Gunn, Part Two**, 1996 (Drumm)
- **The Joy Machine** (1996, Pocket)
- **The Road to Science Fiction #5: The British Way**, 1998 (White Wolf)
- **The Road to Science Fiction #6: Around the World**, 1998 (White Wolf)
- **Human Voices**, 1999 (Henan People's Publishing House)
- **The Science of Science-Fiction Writing**, 2000 (Scarecrow)
- **The Millennium Blues**, 2001 (E-reads)
- **Human Voices**, 2002 (Five Star Books)
- **The Road to Science Fiction; From Gilgamesh to Wells** (editor), 2002 (Scarecrow)
- **The Road to Science Fiction #2: From Wells to Heinlein** (editor), 2002 (Scarecrow)
- **The Road to Science Fiction #3: From Heinlein to Here**, 2002 (Scarecrow)

JAMES GUNN - PUBLISHED BOOKS *(continued)*

- **The Road to Science Fiction #4: From Here to Forever**, 2003 (Scarecrow)
- **The Immortals** (revised and expanded edition), 2004 (Pocket)
- **Speculations on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction** (with Matthew Candelaria), 2005 (Scarecrow)
- **Gift from the Stars**, 2005 (Easton Press)
- **Inside Science Fiction: Second Edition**, 2006 (Scarecrow)
- **Reading Science Fiction** (with Matthew Candelaria and Marleen S. Barr), 2008 (Palgrave Macmillan)
- **Paratexts: Introductions to Science Fiction and Fantasy**, August 2013 (Scarecrow Press).
- **Transcendental**, August 2013 (Tor Books).
- **Transgalactic**, forthcoming March 2016.

Gunn recently sold three more books, including his newest novel, *Transcendental* (2013), published by Tor Books. Campbell Conference and SF Writers Workshop attendees have heard excerpts from this new book.

Co-authored with Jack Williamson in 1954 and originally published in 1955, *Star Bridge* will be published in Tor Books' classic reprint series.

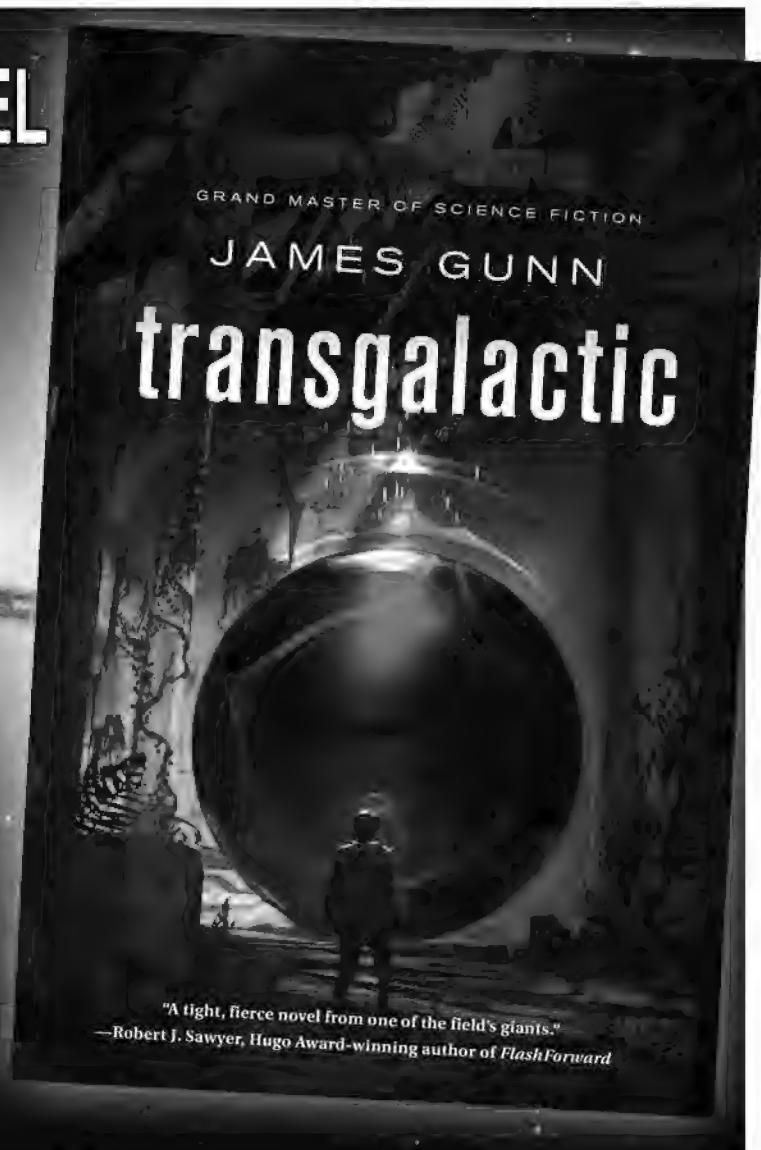
JAMES GUNN'S NEW NOVEL

Transgalactic: the latest novel in Hugo Award Winner James Gunn's SF Grandmaster career!

When Riley and Asha finally reached the planet Terminal and found the Transcendental Machine, a matter transmission device built by an ancient race, they chose to be "translated." Now in possession of intellectual and physical powers that set them above human limitations, the machine has transported them to two, separate, unknown planets among a possibility of billions.

Riley and Asha know that together they can change the galaxy, so they attempt to do the impossible — find each other.

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If you've been following of **The Basement Sublet of Horror** magazine, you know that we have a strong interest in seeking out rare films, to restore and make them available to the public. This next story has become one of the most involved ones that we've experienced over the years. It relates to author James Gunn, Centron Films director of **The Carnival of Souls** Herk Harvey.

Demolition Kitchen Video, the parent company of **The Basement Sublet of Horror**, has been collecting all types of film since the 1970s. One day we got a call from Pauline Harvey, Herk Harvey's widow asking us to inventory Herk's film collection from his years working at the **Centron Corporation** in Lawrence, Kansas. She wanted the films to be cataloged, with his more important films transferred to video. Herk gathered up a number of films that he'd been involved with during his career, but the film archive was more of a series of random titles not really an actual collection. However going through the collection was amazing because there were a lot of interesting films. **The Reluctant Witch** was the one title that we didn't know existed, it also wasn't found in any listing of **Centron** films.

The story of **The Reluctant Witch** involves a professor from a midwestern university who was researching witchcraft. The film footage on the reel was in a raw state. The footage was from a work print that didn't include the original soundtrack, however, it featured some special effects, set-up footage, brief glimpses of Herk Harvey directing, and Herk's cameo in the film playing the role of a gas station attendant. The footage ran about twenty-five minutes but clearly wasn't a complete film.

After researching the title, it turned out that the film was based on a short story by



Director Herk Harvey, in both photos on this page, directing the film as seen in outtake footage.

University of Kansas professor and founder of the **Center for Science Fiction** in Lawrence, James Gunn. I contacted Mr. Gunn to find out more about the back-story to this movie production and also why the film was never completed. The following is a verbal history of the project from a variety of sources, some information may be repeated from the other articles in this issue.

Discouraged by the apparent failure of **Carnival of Souls** and busy with Centron assignments, Harvey never again directed another feature, though he did make several attempts. One was **Flannagan's Smoke**, a comedy script written by John Clifford concerning an escaped gas from a chemist's laboratory and its effect on the townspeople. Another was **The Reluctant Witch**, with a screenplay adapted by KU professor James E. Gunn from his own science fiction short story of the same title. Unlike **Carnival of Souls**, this was actually to be a **Centron production**, as Harvey had persuaded the company to delve into feature films. The shooting did begin, in the late 1960s, but it was not long before budgetary problems and conflicts with the lead actor ultimately shut down the production of **The Reluctant Witch**. Some unedited footage still survives. Harvey also wrote an unproduced feature screenplay of his own, titled **Windwagon**, which was a historical dramatization of the Kansas territorial period and "sailing wagon" innovations of the late 19th century.

The story of **The Reluctant Witch** was originally published under the title **Wherever You May Be** in the magazine **Galaxy Science Fiction**, in May 1953, then reissued in the novelette **The Witching Hour**, in June of 1970.

The man who played the professor is my father, Leonard Schneider. He was working for **Centron** as well, at the time, as a director and writer. They had him play the lead in this unfinished film, along with Jennifer Salt (later of the television comedy/parody series **Soap**).

- Paul Miles Schneider

Gunn's original story **Wherever You May Be** was then brought to the radio in a half hour production by **The National Broadcasting Company (NBC)** in June of 1956, the radio play follows the original story fairly close.

The film footage was probably shot around 1959 or 1960. I wrote the screenplay (from my story, published as **Wherever You May Be** in **Galaxy Magazine** in May 1953) after Herk persuaded **Centron** to go into the feature film business. That was after the success of **Carnival of Souls**. **Carnival of Souls** was done as an independent film with money raised from private investors in Lawrence, and "success" is in quotes because Herk sold the distribution rights to a distributor who didn't pay a dime to Herk or his investors. The scene where the film's lead is escaping from the diner is pretty close to the script. I'm surprised Herk never showed it to me. - James Gunn



In an outtake scene, director Herk Harvey sets up a shot trying to avoid the lense flair occurring.

I had the privilege of working with Herk at Centron on dozens of movies from 1974 to 1985

though I first met Herk in 1968 — probably close to the time when this clip was in production. I also knew Len Schneider, though only from his later visits to his alma mater. I wish Herk and no doubt John Clifford, could have finished this.

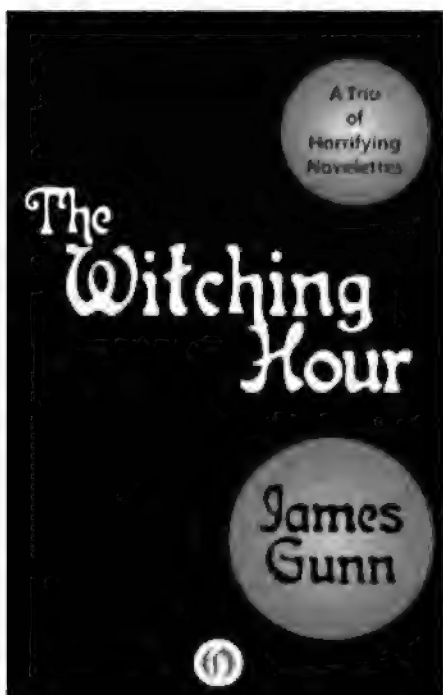
- Jim Stringer

An episode of the USSR science fiction TV series **This Fantastic World**, filmed in 1989 and titled **Psycho-dynamics of the Witchcraft**, was based on James Gunn's 1953 short story **Wherever You May Be**.

Most recently we found a posting online for a Russian movie version of the story called **What if the Bride is a Witch** (title as translated from Russia poster artwork), produced in 2002. We managed to get a copy of the film, but without any subtitles in English, the only thing we can verify is that the plot appears to be close to Gunn's story. In the original post about the film, it did mention that the story was attributed to James Gunn, but the site is Russian language and the translation wasn't clear enough to make sure. - Joel Sanderson



Director Herk Harvey makes a cameo appearance in the film as Joe, the gas station attendant.



My father (Lyle Hart) worked at **Centron** with Herk, John, Len, etc. from about 1962 until 1970-71. Herk was a close friend of our family. I spent a lot of time roaming the **Centron studios** and being on set during shoots as a little kid — I'm even in several of their education films. Centron was unique. Herk was a creative, talented man.

- Thomas Hart

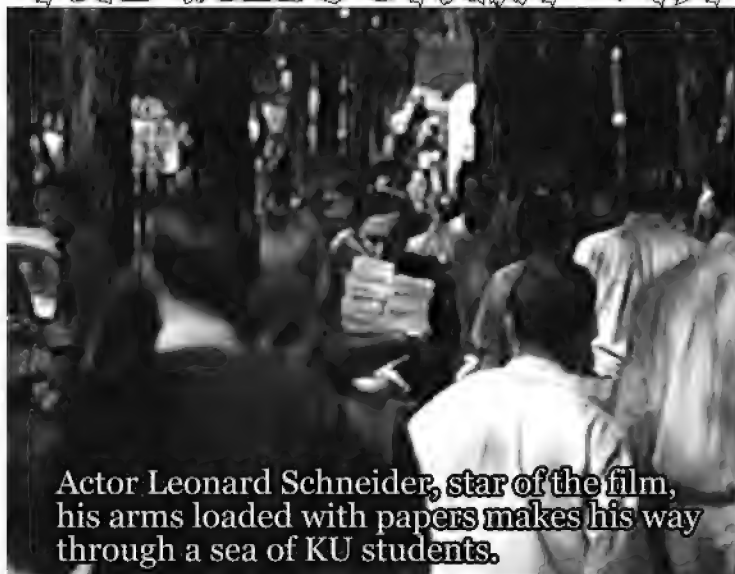
A version was created of the footage that reassembles the footage into an order that might follow the film's original story. The resulting video has been posted to the **Demolition Kitchen Video** collection on **The Internet Archive**, archive.org

- Joel Sanderson

Editor's note:

We'd like to thank James Gunn, Paul Miles Schneider for filling in information about his father, and all of the people who sent in information about the film. Also, if you're interested you can also listen to the radio play version of Gunn's story **Wherever You May Be** by running a **Google search** for the title of the radio play. Author James Gunn's horror anthology **The Witching Hour**, which includes the short story **The Reluctant Witch** is still in print and can be found through online book sellers.

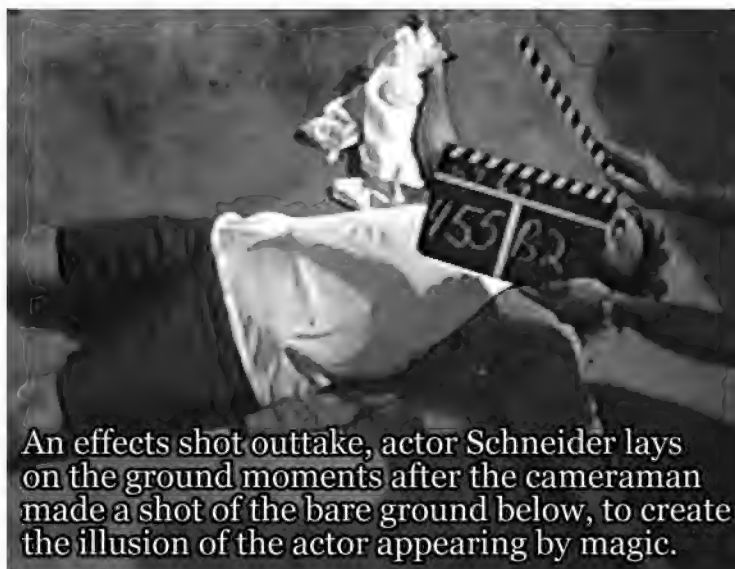
THE RELUCTANT WITCH: FILM STILLs



Actor Leonard Schneider, star of the film, his arms loaded with papers makes his way through a sea of KU students.



Actor Leonard Schneider leaves to do field research on witches and magic.



An effects shot outtake, actor Schneider lays on the ground moments after the cameraman made a shot of the bare ground below, to create the illusion of the actor appearing by magic.



Herk Harvey, right, in costume for his cameo in the film, gives direction to actor Schneider.



In this effects shot, a goose has just appeared in the front seat of Schneider's car, who reaches out to try and touch the creature.



With the camera paused, in this follow up shot, notice an assistant reaching over the back seat to grab the goose to make it appear to have vanished.

Editors note: The bottom two stills might show another reason why the film may have been abandoned. Notice the background in the car windows will be completely different while starting and stopping the camera in a moving car. The special effects would have been visually problematic.

JAMES GUNN'S

LITERATURE OF SCIENCE FICTION, LECTURE SERIES

Note: Materials on this topic come from a variety of sources and individuals and rather than edit them into one narrative, we present them in their entirety. As a result, pieces and sections of information are sometimes repeated.

To help teach his new science-fiction course in 1969 — one of the very first offered at a university — James Gunn began producing a series of films featuring prominent science fiction writers (and one prominent fan); scroll down to see Gunn's essay about creating the Lecture Series. Through interviews with Gunn as well as some lectures, they tell the story of the SF genre:

- Science Fiction Films: A Lecture By Forrest J. Ackerman
- Plot in Science Fiction: A Lecture by Poul Anderson
- The History of Science Fiction After 1938: A Lecture by Isaac Asimov
- Science Fiction and the Mainstream: A Lecture by John Brunner
- Theme in Science Fiction: A Discussion Between Gordon Dickson and James Gunn
- New Directions in Science Fiction: A Seminar with Harlan Ellison
- The Early History of Science Fiction: A Lecture by Damon Knight
- The Ideas in Science Fiction: A Lecture by Frederik Pohl
- An Interview with Clifford Simak: A Career in Science Fiction
- The Early Days of the SF Magazines: An Interview with Jack Williamson



DMZ Productions has gone to great effort to restore these films and present them in original image quality in a two-DVD set. Including an introduction by James Gunn, explaining the beginning of the initial project, notes by Eric Solstein about the restoration, and transcripts of each individual film, this is the first and foremost audio-visual record of science fiction.

Starting in the late 1960s, editor, critic and SF writer James Gunn began filming interviews and lectures with and from a variety of his peers, with the main, stated purpose of employing these films as curriculum aids at his college, and with a secondary purpose of presenting a public face for the literature of the fantastic. But in reality Gunn was embarked on an even larger quest: preserving a vast horde of knowledge locked up in the brains of these men (no women writers, alas, were selected during the brief flourishing of this project), invaluable knowledge and experiences from the first five decades of genre SF. In effect, Gunn was creating an oral history and exegesis of the genre that would preserve seminal information and critical thoughts about the field for all who came after."

CREATING THE LITERATURE OF SCIENCE FICTION FILM SERIES

by James Gunn

The idea of filming the people who had helped shape science fiction originated at the 1969 World Science Fiction Convention in St. Louis. Gordon Dickson was the president of the Science Fiction Writers of America, and he was trying to persuade me to run as his successor (I later succumbed). One of the matters we talked about was what we could do to promote science

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fiction. We came up with ideas for a speakers bureau and a review column and news releases (I was still in charge of the University of Kansas public relations, and full of information about how such things worked). Then I mentioned the possibility of a film series that might be used in public gatherings and college classrooms.

The series would never have gotten off the drawing board had it not been for the contributions of many people. Alex Lazzarino was the key figure. He was the director of a division of the University's Continuing Education program that was called "The Extramural Independent Study Center;" he saw the potential of the series and agreed to fund it. Prof. Peter Dart, a faculty member in the School of Journalism, directed the first few films and Bob Gardner, a cameraman for the University's Children's Research Center, did the filming; later directing and camera work was done by personnel at the EISC.

Mostly the credit goes to the science fiction people who agreed to participate. I went to New York in the fall of 1969 for SFWA's editor-publisher reception and asked people if they would participate. Isaac Asimov said "of course," and so did Fred Pohl and many others. We made the first films on the West Coast. We took our crew to the Nebula Awards held that year in Oakland, California, and filmed Poul Anderson talking about "Plot," then went down the coast to Los Angeles to film Forry Ackerman who



Forest J. Ackermann, being interviewed by James Gunn

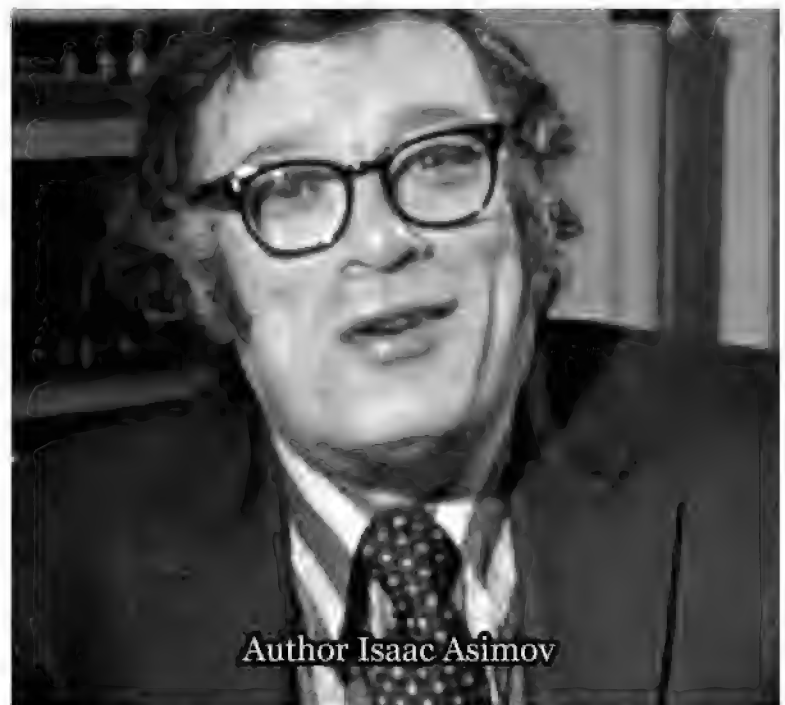
had turned his home into a science-fiction library/museum. That year I had agreed to help teach a class in science fiction that my son and a friend had organized, and I used the class to film Harlan Ellison, who was on campus to give a lecture. He talked about "New Directions," now 30 years in the past.

In 1971 we took a crew to New York and filmed "Lunch with John Campbell" (and discovered, when the camera we rented in New York didn't work, the virtues of "cinema verité") arranged by Harry Harrison. Campbell didn't want to discuss the recent history of science fiction (he had been too busy editing a magazine, he said) and we filmed Isaac Asimov describing science fiction from 1938 to the "present" (as science-fiction writers, we should have had more sensitivity to the passage of time). We also tried to film Damon Knight on the street across from the United Nations building (guards wouldn't let us film on the grounds) and later discovered that street noise obscured his voice; we brought Damon to Lawrence to film the "Early History of SF" in Alex Lazzarino's home. Then we went up to Boston for the World Science Fiction Convention called Noreascon and filmed John Brunner talking about "Science Fiction and the Mainstream" and an interview with the WorldCon guest of honor, Clifford Simak, and got some WorldCon atmosphere. One student in my three-week Intensive English Institute on the Teaching of Science Fiction, Barbara O'Dell, was a film major at San Diego State University, and, as her class project, organized all the class members to produce an interview with Theodore Sturgeon. Some

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(Fred Pohl, Jack Williamson, Gordon Dickson) we filmed in a studio in the EISC building. So it went. I made plans to produce 18 or so of the films and use them as part of a course in science fiction that could be offered to high schools and colleges. But Alex got hired by the Menninger Clinic in Topeka to become a fund raiser and project manager, ... , and Ray Bradbury, and a number of others — but we never were able to complete arrangements. The series got shown, in part, at the Los Angeles World Science Fiction Convention of 1972, and at a Science Fiction Research Association meeting or two. I used all of them in my large science fiction classes. Continuing Education rented out the films (and sold a few) for a decade or so — they were shown in various places around the world, but mostly in the U.S. — and I am pleased to report that Continuing Education eventually earned back the \$50,000 or so that it put into the series. Then Continuing Education went out of the film rental business and turned ownership of the series, then mostly available on VHS tapes, over to the Center for the Study of Science Fiction.

For a couple of decades the Center has been trying to get a grant to update the films and add some new ones, and that still may happen. Times have changed (I remember asking whether we couldn't tape the pieces rather than film them and was told it would take a truck full of equipment). Science fiction has changed too since the 1970s: these accounts of those times record the people (too many of them gone) who helped create and shape it. Now the time machine passes to other hands. One of those pairs of hands belongs to Eric Solstein, through whose vision and expertise these glimpses of a storied past are being made available and who is compiling a new and more comprehensive record.



LITERATURE OF SCIENCE FICTION, LECTURE SERIES: TECHNICAL NOTES ON THE FILMS
By Eric Solstein

All of the films in this collection were produced by James Gunn in the early 1970s as a professor of English at, what is now, the J. Wayne and Elsie M Gunn Center for the Study of Science Fiction, of the University of Kansas in Lawrence.

These works represent the first serious effort to capture Science Fiction writers on film. With few exceptions, these men and women have been very poorly documented. Even the legendary Robert A. Heinlein has been filmed on less than a half dozen occasions, and no recordings do him justice. When Professor Gunn managed to find the funding for this project, VHS was not yet invented, and film production was pretty much limited to the well-heeled and stout hearted.

But beyond any cost and effort, Jim Gunn's films are precious. They may not have the sheen

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of Hollywood productions, but they are very rare primary historical documents of very intelligent people making very strong presentations under the guidance of a supremely knowledgeable and caring peer. If you want the eye-witness account of how Science Fiction's "founding fathers" perceived the birth and maturation of 20th Century art form, there is nowhere else to go.

Once created, these films were circulated (primarily to colleges) as 16 mm. projection prints. Once videotape became available and economical, many old film reels got lost in the shuffle as the entire educational film industry was transformed. By the time VHS versions of these films were finally made, the originals were getting misplaced, project funding had long disappeared and interest was waning.



Author James Gunn in 1972.

When I began to document Science Fiction writers for my own project, the University of Kansas was one of my principal destinations. Jim Gunn had already made copies of his films for me from the somewhat beaten-up VHS copy he considered the "master," and what a copy it was. This tape was painful to watch, a copy of a copy of a copy. It exhibited nearly every kind of noise, distortion and artifact that bad video can, a tragedy I was hoping to set right. It turned out that most of the original materials from which the films had been composed, had been tossed in a dumpster and salvaged by a concerned

student in the nick of time; they were now resident in the basement of Spencer Library. While many of these materials were intact, they were badly faded (from poor storage) and essential components were gone.

In order to make the new video versions presented here, we had to take the second best route. With the assistance of the Spencer staff, all existing (and long uncirculated) projection prints were assembled for my inspection. Over a weekend, I carefully went through each of the many prints to find which was in the best condition for each film.

A full set of prints was brought to DMZ in New York to be cleaned and transferred to video. The copies varied in quality: all were scratched to different degrees, some had "dirt" printed into them from the original internegatives, some had bad splices that needed to be repaired, most had faded somewhat and some had aged to a perfect pink. Unfortunately, the Forrest Ackerman piece (Science Fiction Films) has some bad splices and is missing bits of the picture and sound at its head.

We transferred the worst of them on a Phillips Spirit Dataciné with a Pogle color corrector at The Tape House, and the balance at our own facility. All of the films required additional color correction before cloning them to their final versions on Digital Betacam. They were all

LITERATURE OF SCIENCE FICTION LECTURE SERIES: TECHNICAL NOTES ON THE FILMS

transferred in 16:9 aspect ratio, a decision we had to make, and one that served some films better than others. While the end results are far from perfect, please be assured that the versions before you are far superior to all other extant versions, and the best we could do without a significant additional expenditure.

To create these DVDs, we carefully tested and finessed our MPEG encodes, to achieve the best possible results for the compression required. These films now have another hundred years or so of life (if the DVD standards are to be believed) and we are proud to have made them available again, if only to a small but knowledgeable audience. We trust you will find them valuable.

LITERATURE OF SCIENCE FICTION LECTURE SERIES: ADDITIONAL NOTES

(James Gunn recently send an email to us that offered a little more detail to the story about the creation of the series)

During the first science fiction class that I taught, Harlan Ellison visited KU and agreed to do a film using the class as a background. But even in that first talk with Gordy, I thought of using a series of films with well-known authors talking about topics in science fiction and eventually put them together as a full-filmed course in science fiction. I discussed the idea the following spring in New York at the Nebula Awards weekend, and several authors, including Isaac Asimov, Gordon Dickson, Fred Pohl, Poul Anderson, Harry Harrison, and Damon Knight said they would be glad to take part. So I proposed it to Alex Lazzarino, who said he would provide the financial backing and put together a crew, and the following spring we went out to Oakland, where the Nebula Awards were held, and I filmed Poul Anderson and then went down to Los Angeles to film Ackerman (and Pal), went to New York the following year just before the World Science Fiction Convention in Boston and filmed "Lunch with John Campbell," which Harry Harrison had arranged and Damon Knight in front of the United Nations building (but the traffic noise obscured the sound track, and he came to Lawrence to re-film it in the Lazzarino's living room). We also shot a good deal of film of Harlan Ellison when a couple of his visits to KU.

We also did the piece with Asimov in his New York study (he'd moved from Boston and was in the midst of divorcing his wife). We went up to Boston, where the SF Convention was being held, and filmed the interview with Clifford Simak, which was with preparation, and the film with John Brunner, which he had prepared. The other films, with Jack Williamson, Gordon Dickson, and Fred Pohl were done at the Extramural Independent Studies studio when those authors were in town. I wanted to do some others, Ray Bradbury, for instance, and Robert Heinlein, but we were never able to make arrangements with them.

We did a number of short interviews in Oakland, in New York, and in Boston that I had plans to use in one way or another, but they never got put to use before Alex left KU for Menninger's and the project lost its financial backing. Continuing Education continued to rent the films for educational purposes for a number of years and one C.E. director told me that it had made back its \$50,000 cost. One of Alex's assistants proposed to me after Alex left that we continue the series as a profitable and useful project, but we both got busy on other projects.

JAMES GUNN'S

LITERATURE OF SCIENCE FICTION, LECTURE SERIES: THE UNFINISHED FILMS

(Notes from James Gunn emails)

Forrest Ackerman got in touch with some film people he knew that he thought I should interview as well. Pal responded; Fritz Lang said that he didn't want to give away what he was being paid to deliver in paid talks. The Rod Serling film was totally off-the-cuff. Serling was here for an SUA lecture in Hoch Auditorium (as it was then). We were going to have a reception for him (although my wife got sick with what she called "the Rod Serling flu" and the Lazzarinos stepped in to host in our place), and I was driving him to some destination when I asked if he'd be willing to be interviewed on film. He said "sure," and Alex Lazzarino was able to put together a film crew in an hour or so, and we filmed it in the studio that Alex had set up in what was then used by Extramural Independent Studies and Continuing Education, the old post office building at 7th and New Hampshire.



Still from the unfinished Rod Serling interview, 1971.

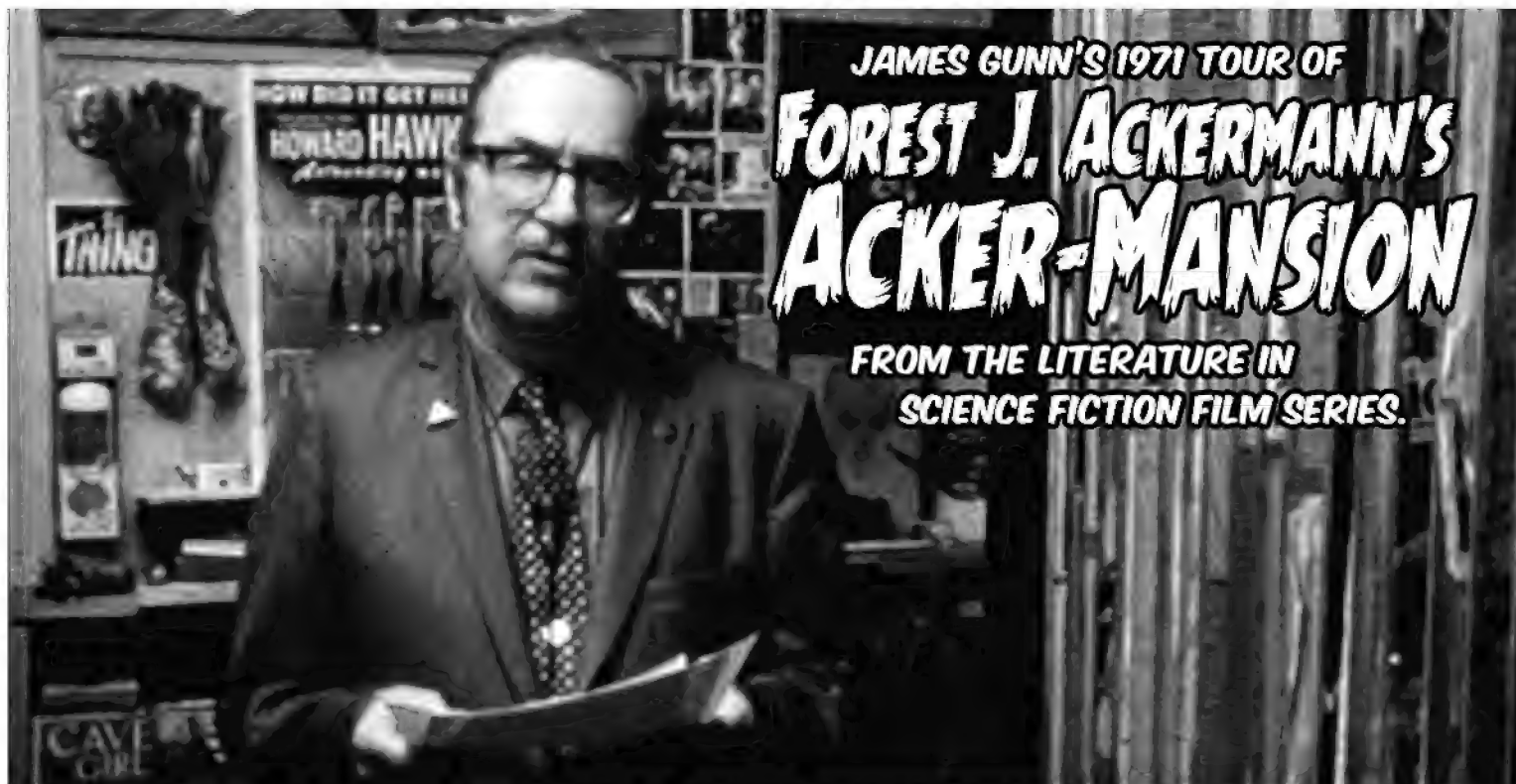
I did the interview with the astronaut, a KU alumnus who at that time was called "Captain America," on a couple of hours' notice, when Alex Lazzarino suggested it.

Editor note, Dave Toplikar: The astronaut, Joe Engle, I believe was making a visit to Topeka, and the interview worked well.

Additional editor notes, BSOH: The student who saved the masters along with a collection of the Literature in Science Fiction film series is the editor of this magazine. In 1989 he, Joel Sanderson, worked as a film inspector in the University of Kansas film library, spending a large amount of time looking through the collections for any unusual titles. There was an additional area storage for films in the basement of the KU Continuing Education building, consisting of thousands of 16mm reels of newsreels that were produced as a classroom information tool by Standard Oil during the 1950s. Sitting on the floor in the same storage area were a series of unmarked boxes, that when opened revealed some of the master reels for the films in the Gunn series along with a number of unfinished film workprints with the films never completed. Nearly the entire film collection at KU was throughout in the early 90s, but several months before this happened our editor found a way to get Gunn's films donated to the science fiction collection at the University of Kansas Spencer Research Library.

It was once said by KU that "No one was interested in these old films." Our posting of the raw footage of Gunn's interview with Rod Serling has nearly 90,000 views on the website YouTube, has been featured on Harry Knowles "Ain't It Cool News," and has also been featured in numerous media blog posts.

At the publication of this issue, only two of the unfinished films have had any attempts at restoration, the complete raw footage of a Rod Serling interview and a silent workprint of an interview with George Pal. The results have been posted as videos on the website Archive.org.



JAMES GUNN'S 1971 TOUR OF FOREST J. ACKERMANN'S ACKER-MANSION

FROM THE LITERATURE IN
SCIENCE FICTION FILM SERIES.



The Acker-Mansion is full of Forest J. Ackermann's collections, so much so that he had to move out into a rented apartment since there was no longer enough room.



Actual model of the Martian war machine from George Pal's production of "War of the Worlds".



Ackermann stands next to one of his many original vintage movie posters.



Left, James Gunn, shown on the right, models the original creature arm used in the hallway sequence, from 1951's version of "The Thing."

Next row, he owns a cast model of the creature called the "Ymir" from the film by effects master Ray Harryhausen called "20 Million Miles to Earth."



The original animation model used in "The Beast with a Million Eyes"



One of the Morlock creature masks from George Pal's production of "The Time Machine"



Ackermann stands next to part of his collection from the early silent film, "Metropolis."



Tyrannosaurus Rex that battled Kong.



The sea creature that attacks the boat.

ACKERMANN'S COLLECTION OF ORIGINAL KING KONG ANIMATION FIGURES!



Triceratops.



Brontosaurus.



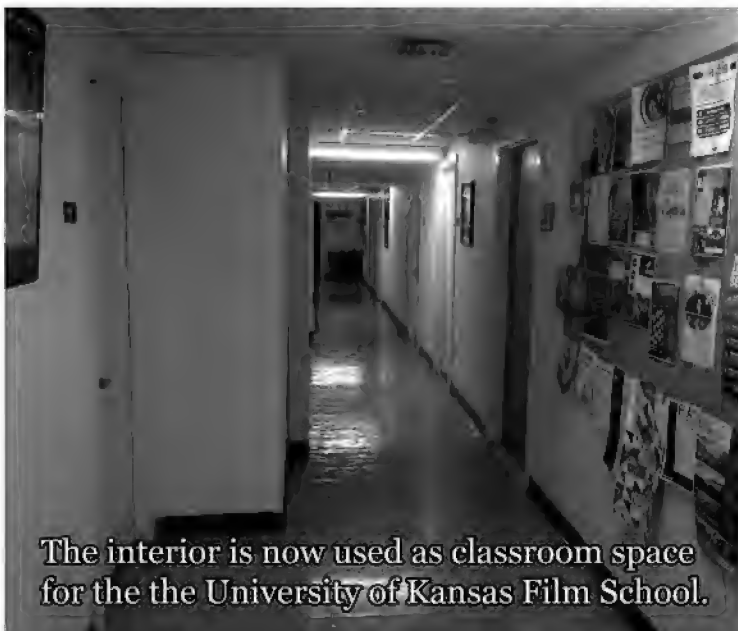
Pterodactyl.

TOUR OF CENTRON STUDIOS

The Basement Sublet of Horror recently got the opportunity to get a tour of the former **Centron Studios** in Lawrence, Kansas. Currently, the building is owned by the University of Kansas and was renamed after the benefactor, Charley Oldfather, donated it to the



The exterior of the building remains as it was in the production days of Centron Studios.



The interior is now used as classroom space for the the University of Kansas Film School.

university. **Centron** was founded in 1947 and quickly moved to the front of industrial and educational films as they were known for producing high-quality films. **Centron** won many awards for its films and claimed an Oscar nomination for the documentary **Leo Beuerman**. In 1981, Wolf and Mosser sold Centron to the Coronet division of Esquire, Inc.

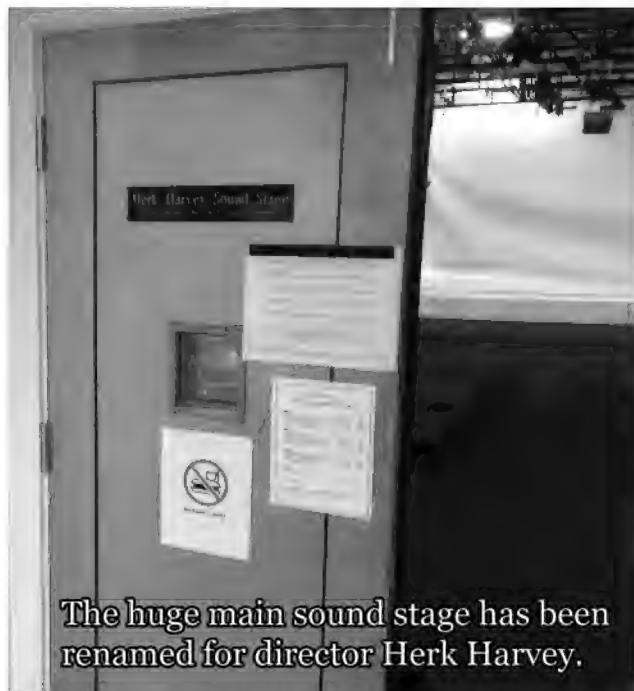
Harold 'Herk' Harvey was the principal director at **Centron**. His 1962 feature, **Carnival of Souls**, was produced with several people associated with **Centron**. John Clifford, a **Centron** screenwriter, wrote the script for **Carnival of Souls**.



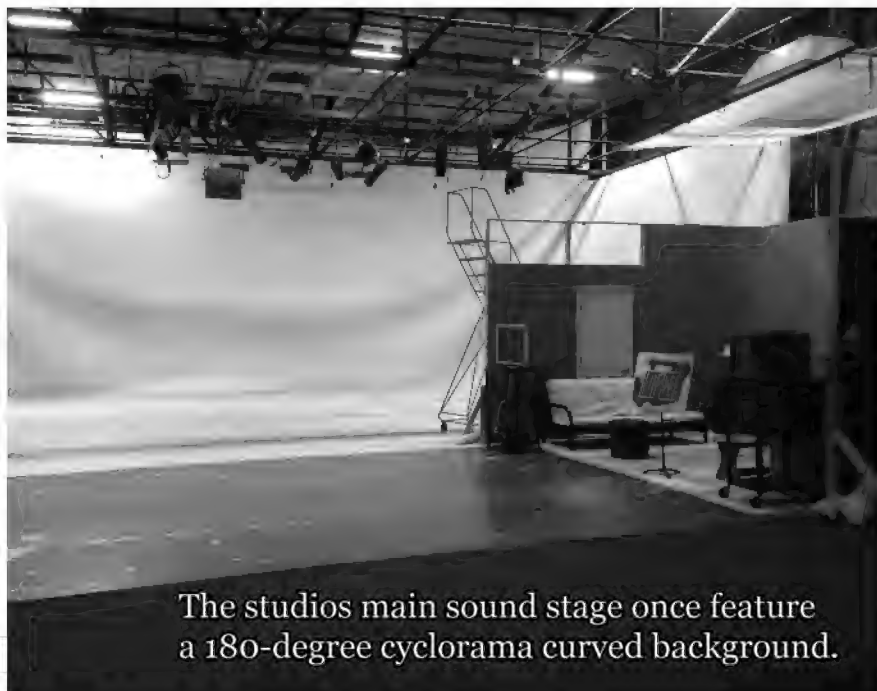
The board meeting room from the Centron days is still in use today for faculty and staff.



The original 16mm projection port in the back of the conference room for previewing films.



The huge main sound stage has been renamed for director Herk Harvey.



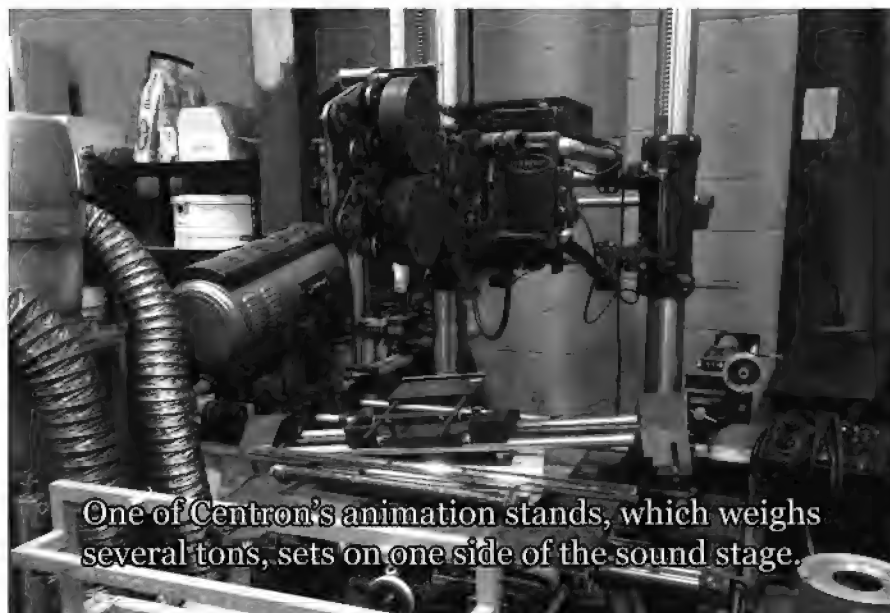
The studios main sound stage once feature a 180-degree cyclorama curved background.



One of the original camera cranes is stored in a corner of the main sound stage.



The prop storage area still contains a number of original items used in Centron productions.



One of Centron's animation stands, which weighs several tons, sets on one side of the sound stage.



Famed film director Kevin Wilmot is an instructor at KU; this is a robot prop from one of his film productions.

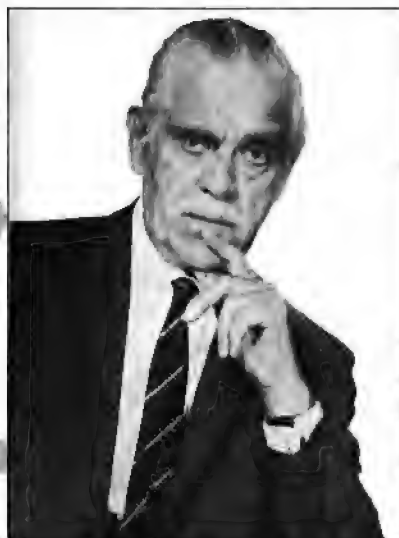


The Alloy Orchestra made a stop on their current tour in Lawrence, Kansas on September 20, 2015, to perform a live soundtrack to a restored version of the silent film classic

Metropolis. **The Alloy Orchestra** creates new scores for classic silent films, then performs them live in theaters around the world. The band was formed in 1991 and has written scores for numerous silent films, performing selections on their frequent global tours. **The Alloy Orchestra** collaborates with the world's best film archives and collectors to present audiences with the very best available prints from some of history's greatest films. Members include Roger Miller on synthesized piano, Terry Donahue on junk percussion, musical saw, and accordion and Ken Winokur performing percussion and clarinet. Ken is also the director of the band.

Their **Metropolis** soundtrack was very detailed with individual themes created for the different characters and situations. They were especially gifted in bringing the dynamics of this incredibly complicated film to life. Standouts sections were the workers underground world, the robot creation sequence, and the debauchery brought to the wealthy rulers who live in the futurist paradise cities above. If you're a fan of silent films and live music if you get a chance to catch **The Alloy Orchestra** on a future tour, it's an experience you should definitely seek out.





CHAMBERLAIN'S GUIDE TO THE FILMS OF **BORIS KARLOFF** PART TWO

FILMS FEATURED IN THIS EDITION:

- **INTRO**
- **THE BLACK CASTLE [1952], PAGE 30**
- **THE BLACK CAT [1935]/THE RAVEN [1935], PAGE 31**
- **THE BODY SNATCHER [1945], PAGE 32**
- **THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN [1935], PAGE 33**
- **THE COMEDY OF TERRORS [1963], PAGE 35**
- **THE DEVIL COMMANDS [1941], PAGE 36**
- **THE GHOUL [1933], PAGE 37**
- **THE MAN THEY COULD NOT HANG [1939], PAGE 38**

INTRO

Several years ago, in October, a mad scientist in a rural suburb of Wichita gave life to his creation...Monster Movie Kid. Or perhaps, I finally got around to writing creatively again and put forth my ramblings for the people to read upon their leisure. In any case, it is time for the 3rd Annual 31 Days of Halloween. That annual event where this writer goes insane by attempting 31 consecutive days of movie reviews.

Now, taking into consideration how busy my life has been lately, it does indeed sound like madness that I would attempt this again. However, it's October and I'm going to be watching horror movies anyway, so why not share this experience once more with all of you. However, I've decided to stir some things up and, rather than do random selections, I'm going with a theme. That year, it's the films of Boris Karloff. In fact, 36 films in 31 days! This series on the films of Karloff is continued from issue #4 of **Basement Sublet of Horror** magazine

THE BLACK CASTLE (1952)

In 1952, Boris Karloff would star in the second film as part of his three-picture deal with Universal. **The Black Castle** would see Karloff get second billing behind Richard Greene, who is perhaps best remembered for his 143 episodes of the television **The Adventures of Robin Hood** in which he had the starring role. Again, Karloff's high billing was misleading as he really was only a supporting character. But, Karloff was happy for the lighter film schedule as he continued to also keep himself busy with radio and television appearances as well as traveling with his fifth wife Evelyn, whom he would be married to for nearly 23 years until his death in 1969.

In **The Black Castle**, Sir Ronald Burton (Richard Greene) travels to Austria hoping to find out what happened to his two friends while they were visiting the sinister Count Karl von Bruno (Stephen McNally, **Winchester '73**). Von Bruno is actually seeking revenge against the men who are responsible for setting some wild natives upon him in Africa, costing him his right eye. Von Bruno is married to Countess Elga (Paula Corday, **The Body Snatcher**), a marriage she had forced upon her. Wild animals and death traps lurk at every corner as Sir Ronald seeks vengeance while also trying to escape with his life and that of the woman he has fallen in love with, Countess Elga.

Karloff stars as Dr. Meissen, personal physician to the Count. However, his loyalties are with Countess Elga as he ultimately sees what an evil man the Count really is. His medicinal knowledge plays a key role in the final plot twist which involves premature burial. The role of Dr. Meissen is actually smaller than that of Voltan in **The Strange Door**. He is once again playing the part of the hero, which is certainly against type considering what he had been doing for the previous 20 years or so in Hollywood.



The Black Castle would mark only the second time Karloff worked with Lon Chaney Jr. Their first film together, **House of Frankenstein** (1944), would see both actors in an equal role. However, by 1952, Lon Chaney's star status had slipped dramatically due in large part to his alcoholism. Here, Lon Chaney plays the mute Gargon, a brute who meets a rather unfortunate end.

Sharp eyes will recognize Michael Pate, who stars here as Count Ernst von Melcher.

He was also in *The Strange Door* as Talon. Sci-fi fans might also recognize John Hoyt as Count Steiken. He was the first doctor on the television series **Star Trek**, playing Dr. Philip Boyce in the pilot episode, "**The Cage**."

Visually, **The Black Castle** surpasses **The Strange Door**, due in large part to producer William Alland. He would find even greater success two years later with **Creature from the Black Lagoon**. I find both movies have a lot of similarities, mostly to the gothic settings and expansive sets. I would lean a little more towards *The Strange Door* because of Charles Laughton's performance. Karloff's roles in both films are mostly interchangeable but he fairs better in **The Strange Door**. Both films are part of the Boris Karloff Collection and well worth your time.

Karloff would complete his Universal contract with **Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde** (1953). He would spend a lot of time over the next several years on television as well as some rather poor film appearances (**The Island Monster** (1954), not a horror flick, and **Sabaka** (1954)) before returning to the horror genre.

THE BLACK CAT (1934)

It's time to go old school and take a look at two classics from Universal, **The Black Cat** (1934) and **The Raven** (1935). These two movies were the first to star both legends of the silver screen, Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi. Karloff had established himself with several films by this point, including **Frankenstein** (1931) and **The Mummy** (1932). For Lugosi, he had started strong with **Dracula** (1931) and continued with **Murders in the Rue Morgue** (1932). Here, both stars are treated as equals on screen, despite Karloff receiving top billing in both.

In **The Black Cat**, Karloff plays Hjalmar Poelzig, a satanic worshipper living in Hungary. Lugosi is Dr. Vitus Werdegast, a man seeking revenge upon Poelzig for the death of his wife and the disappearance of his daughter. An accompanying newlywed couple becomes wrapped up in this tale of revenge, filled with amazing visuals and a classical music soundtrack that runs throughout the background of the film, very rare at the time. No surprise that this movie was a huge hit, guaranteeing both men future box office success. It has topics very uncommon for the day, including necrophilia, torture and satanic worship. Highly recommended classic!

In **The Raven**, Lugosi stars as Dr. Richard Vollin, a surgeon who is quite obsessed with Edgar Allan Poe, even recreating Poe's torture devices in his own personal chamber of horrors. This was Lugosi's movie but Karloff's star power still had him being top-billed. Karloff plays a criminal who becomes Vollin's tool of revenge upon the Thatcher family after his love for the lovely Jean was rebuffed. For 1935, the scenes of torture and revenge were not openly accepted by the movie audience and it did not do well at the box office (despite the same themes being well-received the previous year). In fact, this movie has been credited for the lull in horror movies in the late '30s. That said, it's highly recommended classic!





Both movies are available on DVD in The **Bela Lugosi Collection**. With three other movies and at a price of less than \$25, it is well worth the investment. They are also available through the Universal Vault Series separately but the Lugosi box set is the way to go. Also, be sure to listen as Derek Koch discuss the Karloff and Lugosi films in episodes 34 and 35 of his **Monster Kid Radio** podcast. Derek and yours truly had a great time talking about these two horror legends.

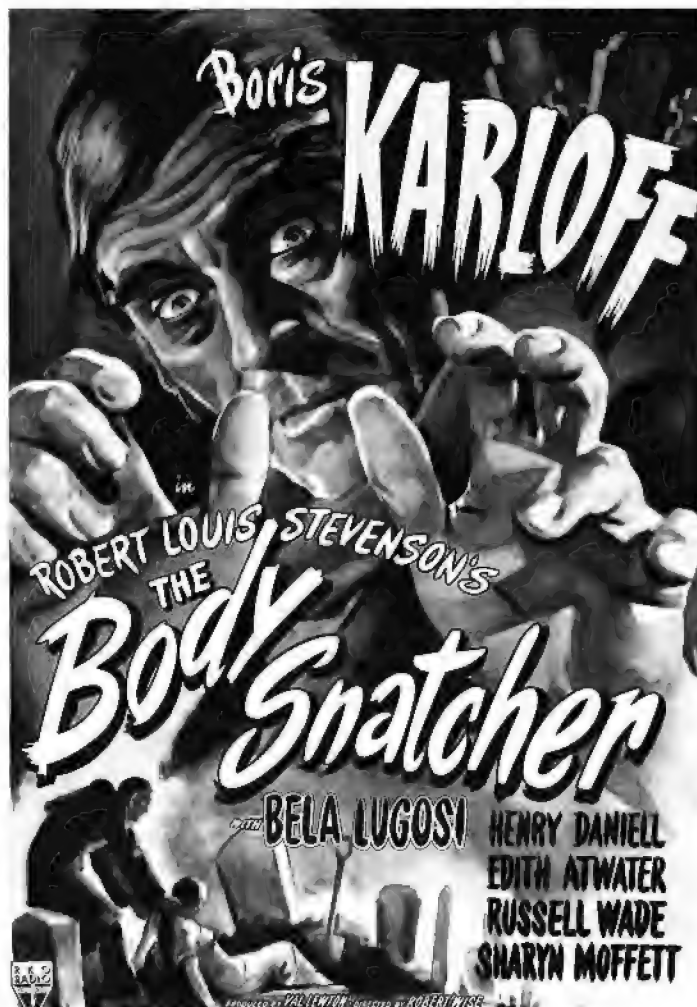


THE BODY SNATCHER (1945)

After **The Climax** (1944), Karloff went to work on another film for Universal, **House of Frankenstein** (1944). It was another mad doctor role but it was exciting to see him alongside the monster, Dracula and the Wolf Man. However, it was his next film that allowed him to leave the laboratory behind and take on a very different role. Under the production of the legendary Val Lewton, **The Body Snatcher** (1945) is easily one of Karloff's best films that showed us he was much more than a man in a lab coat.

The Body Snatcher is based on the classic Robert Louis Stevenson short story with a screenplay written by Philip MacDonald and Val Lewton (credited as Carlos Keith). It is set in Edinburgh in 1831 and tells the tale of Dr. Wolf MacFarlane (Henry Daniell, Professor Moriarty in the 1945 Basil Rathbone Sherlock Holmes film **Woman in Green**). Dr. MacFarlane runs a medical school where one of his students, Donald Fettes (Russell Wade, **The Ghost Ship** (1943)), has befriended a young paralyzed girl in need of surgery. While Fettes inspires the doctor to perform surgery and reignite his medical passions, there looms a mysterious presence in the background...cabman John Gray (Boris Karloff). It seems Gray "acquires" bodies for the good doctor by any means necessary. Gray and Dr. MacFarlane go back to the time of the infamous Burke and Hare trial as Gray holds a secret that could destroy the doctor.

Karloff is absolutely amazing in this picture. He greatly appreciated the opportunity to play such a well-written and developed character. It was refreshing for him to play something different than the countless mad



scientist roles he had been playing. The relationship between Gray and MacFarlane allowed Karloff to display his acting abilities not always possible in some of his other films. When we first see him, he befriends the little girl and seems utterly charming. Seconds later, he shoots an evil look towards the doctor's housekeeper that tells us all it is not as it appears. In every scene, Karloff emits an evil charm that is frightening.

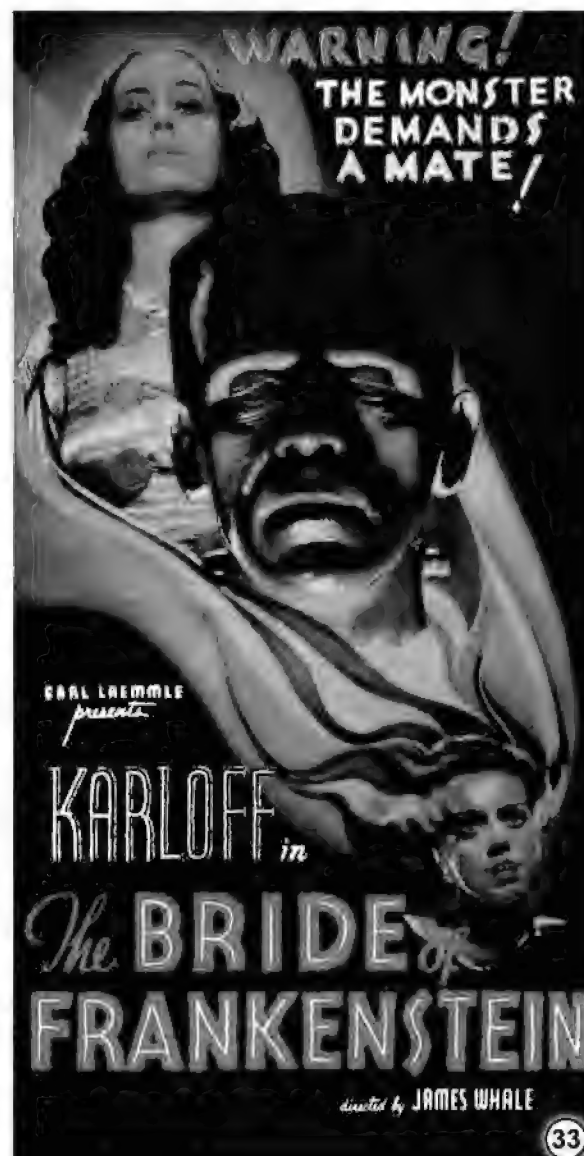
The Body Snatcher would be the eighth and final time Karloff and Bela Lugosi would work together. RKO Pictures insisted Lugosi be added to help with box office appeal and Lewton reluctantly wrote a role for Lugosi. His role is a very small one as Joseph, an assistant to Dr. MacFarlane. However, the scene between Karloff and Lugosi is amazing and a fitting way for the two to end their on screen performances together.

For anyone who has seen a Val Lewton film before, you know exactly what to expect. A tale with some truly scary moments wrapped up in a movie where the horror elements are downplayed in a world full of shadows and mystery. The final scene is horrific and legendary director Robert Wise (**The Day The Earth Stood Still**, **Star Trek: The Motion Picture**) walked away from the picture with a great deal of respect and a new opinion on the acting talents of Karloff.

The Body Snatcher was the first of three consecutive films Karloff did for producer Val Lewton. While Lewton only worked on 14 films, his 9 horror films stand out as not only his best but true classics of the genre. Karloff is amazing in this film and I highly recommend it.

THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1935)

Four years after Universal made Boris Karloff a big enough star he could go by his last name only, the Frankenstein saga continued with that rarest of things in Hollywood: a sequel that is better than the original. **The Bride of Frankenstein** is a classic in every sense of the word. Not only is it the best of the Universal Frankenstein series and one of the best Universal Horror movies, it is also considered one of the 100 best movies ever made. Boris Karloff as back, this time getting credited as the monster and only using the name "Karloff." Colin Clive returns as Dr. Frankenstein, somehow saved from what appeared to be certain death off of the windmill at the end of Frankenstein. Valerie Hobson assumes the role of Elizabeth from replacing Mae Clarke. I personally preferred Mae Clarke's performance but by 1935 she was no longer a lead actress. Ernest Thesiger (the undertaker from 1951's **Scrooge**) plays Dr. Pretorius as over-the-top as was legal. He is the quintessential mad scientist. Dwight Frye is back again, this time as Karl and things turn out just as bad for him the second time around. Una O'Connor (**The Bells of Saint Mary's**) played Minnie, the old woman/servant who is absolutely a joy to watch. Her performance here is reminiscent of what she did in **The Invisible Man** (1933). Sadly, Frederick Kerr, who played Baron Frankenstein in 1931, had died in 1933 and did not reprise his role. And we can't forget Elsa Lanchester as





PICTURES OF THE BRIDE

As portrayed by actress Elsa Lanchester.



both Mary Shelley in the prologue as well as the bride at the end of the movie. She puts in a classic performance that is an iconic image in the history of Hollywood.

Watching both **Frankenstein** and **Bride of Frankenstein** back-to-back, there are lots of differences from one film to the next. The Frankenstein house in the village becomes a grand castle. Baron Frankenstein just disappears while Elizabeth has started seeing Death and appears to be in touch with the netherworld. Colin Clive ages a lot in that four-year gap. The fact he died two years later from alcoholism comes as no surprise. While the monster is one dimensional and full of hate in **Frankenstein**, you can easily sympathize with him in **Bride**. He's brutal at times then so calm in others. He also now speaks and seems so lonely. And when he does find a friend, his tears of joy are heartwarming. The monster was at his peak here. Karloff's performance in **Son of Frankenstein** was more subdued, **The Ghost of Frankenstein** (Lon Chaney Jr.) and **Frankenstein Meets The Wolfman** (Bela Lugosi) saw him more as a monster than a man. And by the time Glenn Strange assumed the role in **House of Frankenstein**, he seemed almost an afterthought. The parts with Pretorius can be a little over-the-top at times but the fun factor is turned up a notch.

The Blu-ray is stunning, even more so than **Frankenstein**. Another film that I've watched more times than I can remember. From this first viewing in the 1970s to the videotape I bought at Suncoast Motion Picture Company in 1989 to the two DVDs and now the Blu-ray, it's a semi-annual Halloween event. Need I say it? Highly recommended!

THE COMEDY OF TERRORS (1963)

Following **The Raven** (1963), Boris Karloff and Peter Lorre engaged on a rather comical tour to promote the film. A series of events and bad weather left Karloff exhausted and he returned to England for much of the rest of the year. However, he was coaxed back to the set for a smaller role in another American International Pictures release, **The Comedy of Terrors** (1963).

Karloff was reunited with co-stars Vincent Price and Peter Lorre again as well as Basil Rathbone, whom he had worked with back in 1939's **Tower of London**. Rathbone had just recently returned to the horror/mystery/suspense genre in the more serious effort **Tales of Terror** (1962). Here, Rathbone clearly approached his character seriously with tongue planted firmly in cheek with the end result being classic. However, had Boris Karloff's health been better, the film clearly would have had a different look.

Originally, Karloff was cast to play the part of landlord John F. Black, Esquire. The role required an excessive amount of moving and jaunting around, which Karloff could no longer do. His emphysema, arthritis and bad back were making simple movements painful at this stage of his career and Karloff was wise enough to



know what he could and could not do. So, he accepted the role of the elderly Amos Hinchley instead, which worked out well for everyone.

Vincent Price stars as Waldo Trumbull, the owner of a funeral parlor who married the lovely Amaryllis (Joyce Jameson) in order to secure the funeral business owned by her father Amos Hinchley. Amos is deaf and quite senile, usually seen slurping his soup and constantly complaining that Amaryllis never lets him have his “medicine,” which is actually poison Waldo is trying to give him to finally kill him off. Waldo prefers to drink rather than show his wife any attention, which is quite the opposite intention of his criminal assistant Felix Gillie (Peter Lorre), who clearly loves and adores Amaryllis but is too scared to do anything about it. Now, Waldo and Felix can best be described as a Laurel and Hardy version of Burke and Hare, seeking out bodies so they can perform the funeral service, reusing the same coffin time and again. But the rent is due and Mr. Black is threatening to take action unless it is paid. This forces the duo down a very hilarious path that only Stan and Ollie could have pulled off better.

Unlike **The Raven**, **The Comedy of Terrors** is played strictly for laughs. Writer Richard Matheson wisely went that route and it paid off for the most part. There are some moments where the comedy seems forced and others where it becomes a little tedious. Director Jacques Tourneur (**The Cat People** (1942), **I Walked with a Zombie** (1943)) directed his next-to-last theatrical film and while he didn't reach the level of his days with Val Lewton, it added to the overall star power of the movie. Rathbone is wonderful as the landlord who never dies while continuing to shout out lines from Shakespeare. Price and Lorre do what they do best, clearly working together with no effort at all and what they accomplish is gold. Comedian Joe E. Brown provides some funny scenes in the cemetery. And, of course, we have a few buxom beauties to entertain the fathers in the audience while the kids want more dead bodies.

Karloff has a smaller role in the movie but he shows off his comedic talents better than in any other film. Every time Amos appears you know you are going to get a laugh. While a third film was talked about, it never transpired. Sadly, Peter Lorre would pass away the following year in 1964 from a stroke at the age of 59, making only two more films after **The Comedy of Terrors**. Basil Rathbone would die less than four years later at the age of 75 in 1967 from a heart attack and Karloff would die in 1969.

While I prefer **The Raven**, **The Comedy of Terrors** is a wonderful companion piece and well worth adding to the collection. The two films are usually paired together, as they are on the new **Vincent Price Collection II** on Blu-ray.

THE DEVIL COMMANDS (1941)

By 1941, Boris Karloff was nearing the end of his mad doctor phase. He would certainly continue to play that role throughout his entire career, but a different acting challenge was looming right around the corner...a stage play in New York. The seeds for one of the most memorable roles he would ever play started in 1940. Karloff was to play the criminal Jonathan Brewster in the dark comedy **Arsenic and Old Lace**. 1940 had seen the release of eight films. There was a spy thriller (**British Intelligence**), the final two Mr. Wong films, four mad doctor flicks and the comedic **You'll Find Out**. As the year was closing, he had one more mad doctor role before it was time to head to New York.

In **The Devil Commands**, Karloff plays Dr. Julian Blair, a scientist who has created a device that studies human brain waves. After his wife is killed in a car accident, Dr. Blair believes the device can be used to contact the dead. His colleagues are worried that he is dealing in knowledge man was not meant to know. After meeting a phony medium, Mrs. Walters (Anne Revere, an actual descendent

of the legendary Paul Revere), he soon retreats to an isolated coastal home where he can continue his experiments. However, the local townspeople become suspicious of him and as bodies begin to disappear from the local cemetery, all leads point to the reclusive and distraught Dr. Blair.

This is very much a different type of mad doctor role for Karloff. While he is clearly obsessed with his research, Dr. Blair is incredibly conflicted at the trail of death surrounding it. He has to use bodies to create a séance-like circle to open the doorway to the beyond. He does accomplish that and appears to be close to success as we hear his dead wife's voice from beyond the grave. But is it truly hers or something more sinister? Karloff plays Dr. Blair as a man desperate to be reunited with his dead wife, drained of all will and energy and full of remorse on the evil deeds he is doing. Meanwhile, Mrs. Walters possesses some type of evil control over him that is never truly explained. After he exposes her as a fraud, she quickly moves into the role of assistant/controller, another unique aspect to this mad doctor role.

The film is told as a flashback through the narration of Dr. Blair's daughter Anne (Amanda Duff). Her voice has an eerie tone to it that almost comes across as too melodramatic at times. But combined with images of the creepy coastal house, it adds to the foreboding tone of the film.



Karloff would rush the completion of the picture during the first week of December 1940 so he could head to New York and begin work on **Arsenic and Old Lace**. **The Devil Commands** would be released on Feb. 3, 1941, by which time Karloff was already becoming a hit on the stage. Combined with a strong supporting cast and a good script, as well as Karloff demanding presence, **The Devil Commands** is one his best mad doctor roles. At a little over an hour, it's a fantastic way to spend a rainy afternoon. However, it does appear to be out of print, so it may require some research on your part.

THE GHOUL (1933)

"When the full moon strikes the door of my tomb, I will come back, you hear? I will come back...to kill." Professor Morlant, **The Ghoul**

1933 would be a key year for Boris Karloff as he would temporarily walk out on Universal Studios. This came about following a disagreement with the studio over his pay for performance in **The Invisible Man**. Yes, indeed Karloff was scheduled to play Dr. Jack Griffin in that film albeit briefly. Director James Whale actually never really cared much for Boris and ultimately pushed for Claude Rains. However, Universal did peg Karloff for the film although at a reduced rate from his regular salary, which was firmly stated in his contract. This would result in Karloff walking out of Universal and soon to be a founding member of the Screen Actors Guild. During 1933, it would also leave him available for work which he ultimately found in Britain with **The Ghoul**.

The film offers a mixed bag that leaves fans of it rather split down the middle. Visually, the film is



appealing and has a couple of great cast members in Karloff, Cedric Hardwicke and Ernest Thesiger. The story is somewhat reminiscent of **The Mummy** as Professor Morlant (Karloff) is a British Egyptologist who believes possessing a jewel called The Eternal Light will guide him to immortality as given to him by the god Anubis. The jewel must be wrapped in his hand after he dies and is placed in a tomb. However, if it leaves his hand, he will arise and kill those responsible. Great setup, good cast, creepy visuals. So where does this film go wrong?

Part of the film's problem is its rather confusing plot and that is really due to too many characters and too much comic relief. I love a laugh or two in a horror film. I also greatly enjoy horror comedies but this film is set quite seriously and then seems to get off track with too many subplots about characters we ultimately don't learn much about nor really care to. The scenes with Karloff and Thesiger and jewel thieves and the Egyptian Aga Ben Dragore (Harold Huth) work very well. The rest really seems to drag the movie down. And, unfortunately, a few developments at the end of the movie remove the supernatural element, spoiling a bit of the fun.

The story behind this film is perhaps better than the final product. **The Ghoul** disappeared shortly after its 1933 release only to be rediscovered in 1969 in Prague.

It had substantially deteriorated and had Czech subtitles. Because of this, the movie was still virtually unseen and had acquired a legendary status. Many film historians went as far as to say that it was one of Karloff's finest films. The film was released on VHS around 1990, which is when I first saw it. The print was indeed very rough but I remember enjoying it despite being a little confused on what exactly was going on. As is often the case when "lost" films are recovered, the product did not quite live up to the hype.

Thankfully, an intact and pristine print was eventually recovered and released on DVD by MGM. This print is beautiful and does enhance the film presentation greatly. **The Ghoul** is still a bit of an uneven mess at times but well worth checking out. Viewers must beware though as those earlier Czech prints still circulate from time to time. Make sure you are watching the MGM print and enjoy it for what it offers.

THE MAN THEY COULD NOT HANG (1939)

"I offered you life. You gave me death."

-Dr. Savaard (Boris Karloff), **The Man They Could Not Hang** (1939)

It had been three years since Karloff had starred in a true horror film. He had appearances in some mysteries, such as **Charlie Chan at the Opera** (1937) and the disappointing but harmless **The Invisible Menace** (1938). He had even taken on his own Asian detective film series with the Mr.

Wong character. But 1939 would see him return to Universal with his third and final appearance as the Monster in **Son of Frankenstein** (1939). By this time, he was also perfecting the mad scientist role and was ready to elevate it to new heights. That first step came in **The Man They Could Not Hang** (1939).

Karloff stars as Dr. Henryk Savaard, a researcher in cryonics. He has developed a technique for bringing back the dead using an artificial heart and is ready for human experimentation with his assistant Bob. However, when the assistant's fiancée protests and brings in the police, the experiment is stopped and Bob dies. Dr. Savaard is put on trial for murder and, ultimately, put to death by hanging. However, Dr. Savaard has arranged for his other assistant, Lang, to secure his body upon death and revive him using the heart. However, Dr. Savaard is a changed man and the jurors who convicted him are all turning up dead...by hanging. A dinner party is being planned but who is going to survive the evening.

Karloff's sensitive portrayal of Dr. Savaard elevates the film and makes us sympathize with his character even as he is killing one juror after another. The cinematography is masterfully done by director Nick Grinde, who would work with Karloff two more times the following year. A sharp looking film combined with Karloff's great performance as both the undeserving victim of a bloodthirsty jury and a lost soul seeking revenge. However, the biggest flaw in this film, as is seen in other Karloff films, concerns the secondary characters. You always have the "necessary" comic relief that usually results in more groans than laughs. Supporting characters are shallowly written and irritate the viewer because they offer little and take away screen time from the man they all really want to see.



The script also starts off with lofty goals of learning about life after death and ultimately becomes little more than a revenge flick. This would bother Karloff a great deal as most of his mad scientist films were similar in tone. He hoped they would spend more time on the script but the formula was a proven success. Hollywood knew what they audiences wanted out of their Karloff films and the studios didn't want to take any risks.

Despite its flaws, **The Man They Could Not Hang** was a return to form for Karloff and would escalate the cycle of mad scientist roles that Karloff would perfect in the late '30s and early '40s. With perhaps one exception, this was the best of the films and comes highly recommended. It is part of a wonderful four-film set, **Icons of Horror Collection: Boris Karloff**, but its availability is hit and miss right now. Seek it out and you'll have four of the better Karloff films.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN PART THREE, IN THE NEXT ISSUE...

FROM THE
BLACK LAGOON

FROM MUSTY CLASSICS TO FRESH BLOOD, ALL HORROR MOVIES HAVE A HOME
HERE WHERE IT'S ALWAYS HALLOWEEN!

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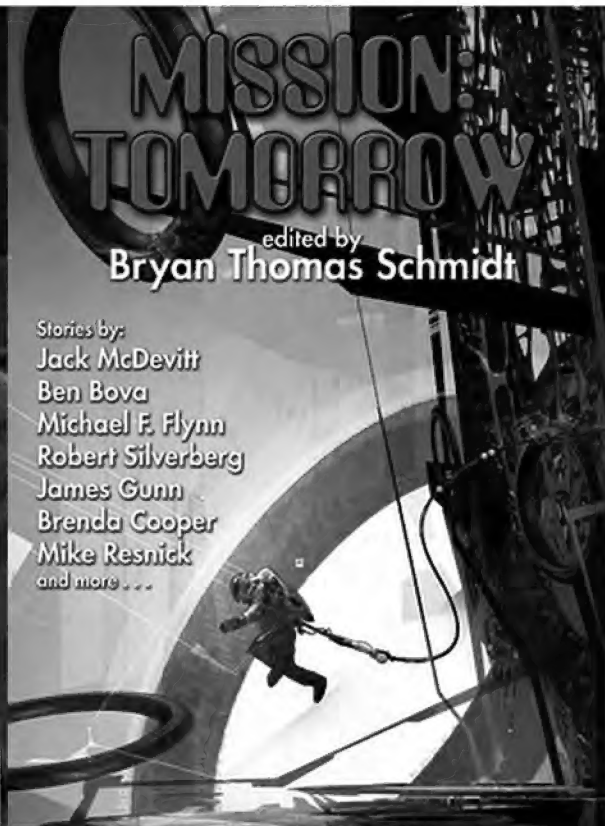
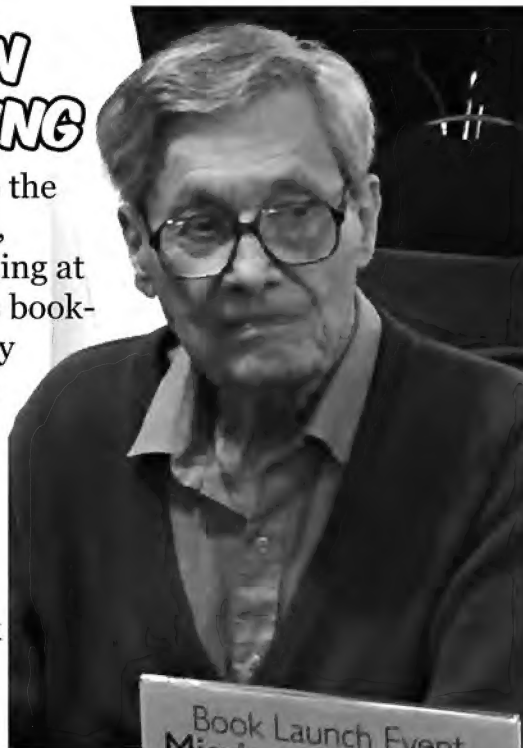


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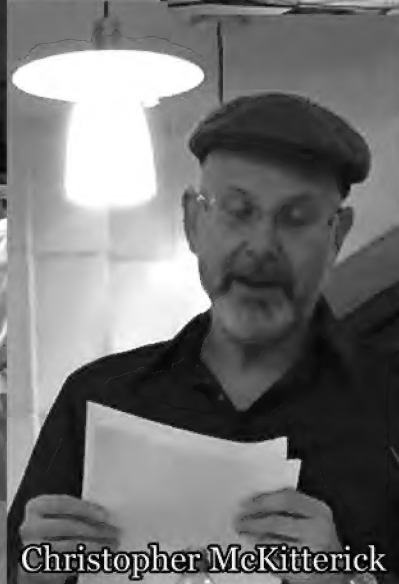
JAMES GUNN BOOK READING

As we were wrapping up the production on this issue, James Gunn gave a reading at the University of Kansas bookstore for a new anthology that he's contributing to called **Mission Tomorrow**.

The publication also features authors Robin Wayne Bailey and Christopher McKittrick. It was compiled by Bryan Thomas Schmidt.



Bryan Thomas Schmidt gives an introduction to the anthology.



Christopher McKittrick



Robin Wayne Bailey



James Gunn reading from his contributed short story.



James Gunn and Bryan Thomas Schmidt signing copies of the book

FOLLOW UP INFORMATION

FROM PREVIOUS BSOH ISSUES!

GREEN HELL FROM THE VOID

After the third issue of **Basement Sublet of Horror magazine** had gone to press, heard from Lance Hayes, director of the film **King Kung Fu** with some additional information on Tom Leahy's film short **Green Hell from the Void** in response to the feature article on the film written by Richard Chamberlin in that issue. Lance provided the following.

Lance Hayes knew about the project since he had worked with Tom Leahy, at **Bob Walterscheid Productions** in Wichita. Tom Leahy wanted to make **Green Hell from the Void** as a feature, but he never got the financing for the project. He had written a script and he shot a pilot sample film to try to round up cash, but it just never came together as a feature film. The monster looks like a bit of a cross between **Creature from the Black Lagoon** and **King Kong**. Tom was really talented with the mask-making art. He also created the mask for John Balee, who played the lead, in the film Lance Hayes directed called, **King Kung Fu**.

The lead actor in **Green Hell from the Void**, who hadn't been identified yet in the third issue of **Basement Sublet of Horror magazine**, was Robert Carroll, who played "F. Lawrence LaRue," the newscaster, in the Lance Hayes feature **King Kung Fu**. He was the real News anchor at channel 3 for a long time, in the 60s, and possibly at the same time Tom Leahy worked there. Tom had made **The Beast from the Beginning of Time** at KARD earlier as a black and white feature film. Lance Hayes said that "Bob Carroll was a nice guy, a bit aristocratic, perhaps, for television one of the last of the 'old school,' ala Ollie Thompson on Channel 12 but a little classier".

PHOTOS



Left: Artist Bradley Beard was pleased with the feature we wrote about him in BSOH issue #4, he posted this photo of himself holding the issue on Facebook.

Right: This is a photo of Tom Leahy from The Host Roast held in Wichita to honor him in 2004.



In 2015, James Gunn was inducted into The Science Fiction Hall of Fame in Seattle. Gunn cofounded the organization in 1996 in Lawrence, Kansas.

